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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 18th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HUDYMA (Ukraine)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 76: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (A/49/20, A/49/280)

AGENDA ITEM 147: QUESTION OF THE REVIEW OF THE AGREEMENT GOVERNING THE ACTIVITIES OF STATES ON THE MOON AND OTHER CELESTIAL BODIES (A/49/141)

1. The CHAIRMAN, recalling that two years previously the international community had celebrated International Space Year, said that many of the cooperative activities launched as part of the Year were continuing and the momentum given to international cooperation in space activities was accelerating. Over the past year, the international community had continued its efforts to address ways in which space technology could be used to enhance international security in all its forms - political, economic, social and environmental. A central concept of the post-cold-war era was that all forms of security were interrelated and could not be considered in isolation from each other. There was now an opportunity to enhance and revitalize cooperation in space activities so that new policies and programmes for the innovative use of space technologies could be developed.

2. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subsidiary bodies were the Organization's main tools for responding to the changing international environment as it related to the exploration and utilization of outer space. They had succeeded in developing the entire body of international space law consisting of five international treaties and four sets of principles. In accordance with article 18 of the Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, the General Assembly needed to take up the question of the review of the Agreement at its current session. That was particularly fitting on the thirty-third anniversary of the first manned flight into outer space and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first manned lunar landing.

3. Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Chairman, Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space), introducing the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its thirty-seventh session (A/49/20), said that the end of the cold war had undoubtedly increased the opportunities for meaningful cooperation in space between former rivals. Greater use of space technology in a cooperative manner would result in increased security benefits to the international community. The report covered the following main areas: ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes; the report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on the work of its thirty-first session and implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82); the report of the Legal Subcommittee on the work of its thirty-third session; and spin-off benefits of space technology: review of current status. In addition to those main areas, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had also discussed the possibility of convening a third United Nations Conference on the

Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space; its own methods of work and those of its subsidiary bodies; and the possibility of increasing its membership.

4. During its consideration of the report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on the work of its thirty-first session and implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had dealt with such important matters as the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, coordination of space activities within the United Nations system, remote sensing of the Earth by satellites, Earth and space environment, and the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. For the first time, as part of the work of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, it had also dealt with the issue of space debris.

5. At its eighth session, the Working Group of the Whole to Evaluate the Implementation of the Recommendations of UNISPACE 82 had concluded that, while some progress had been made, many recommendations had not been implemented and much work remained to be done before they would be. The Working Group had felt, in particular, that further efforts to promote the applications of space science and technology for development should be made in the following four areas: stimulating the growth of indigenous nuclei and an autonomous technological base in space technology in the developing countries; promoting a greater exchange of actual experiences with space applications; United Nations funding; and voluntary contributions. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had noted with appreciation the financial contributions made by the Governments of Austria and Pakistan and also by a number of organizations.

6. After considering the question of convening a third UNISPACE conference, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had agreed that such a conference could be convened in the near future and that, before a recommendation was made for the date of the conference, there should be a consensus recommendation on the agenda, venue and funding of the conference. It had noted that the reports submitted by various bodies had helped it fulfil its role as a focal point for international cooperation in outer space, especially with respect to the practical applications of space science and technology in developing countries. It had recognized the importance of ongoing international efforts to ensure the continuity, compatibility and complementarity of remote-sensing systems and had noted their value for environmental monitoring.

7. After considering the question of the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had agreed that the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 47/68 of 14 December 1992, should remain in their current form until amended and that before amendment, proper consideration should be given to the aims and objectives of any proposed revision. It had expressed satisfaction that the subject of space debris was finally a separate agenda item on the agenda of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and had agreed that there was a need for further research concerning space debris and that it was important to have a firm scientific and technical basis for future action on the complex attributes of space debris.

8. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had taken note of the progress achieved by China, India, Japan, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the European Space Agency in the various space transportation system programmes in operation or planned. It had also considered such questions as the examination of the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit; matters relating to life sciences, including space medicine; progress in the geosphere-biosphere (global change) programme; matters relating to planetary exploration; and matters relating to astronomy. It had endorsed the theme fixed for special attention at the 1995 session of the Subcommittee - "Application of space technology for education, with particular emphasis on its use in developing countries". It had expressed appreciation to the Committee on Space Research and the International Astronautical Federation for their support of the Subcommittee's work and for the symposium they had conducted on the 1994 theme "Space applications for disaster prevention, warning, mitigation and relief". On the matter of the space and Earth environments, it had decided to further request the Commission on Sustainable Development to bring to the notice of its members the useful role of space technology and its applications in assisting sustainable development.

9. With regard to the work of the Legal Subcommittee, he said that after many years of difficult negotiations the General Assembly, in resolution 47/68 of 14 December 1992, had adopted the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space. In accordance with those Principles, the Subcommittee had re-established its Working Group in order to review and discuss possible revisions to the Principles. After a preliminary exchange of views, the Working Group had concluded that its consideration of the Principles should be suspended for one year, pending the results of the work in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

10. The Subcommittee had considered a number of working papers with regard to the definition and delimitation of outer space but there had been no progress in resolving the differences between those delegations that considered the definition and delimitation of airspace and outer space to be a practical and legal necessity and those delegations that maintained that there was no need to establish such a boundary.

11. In its consideration of questions relating to the geostationary orbit, the Working Group had based its discussion on a working paper that took into account earlier "working non-papers" and the views and suggestions expressed by many delegations at previous sessions of the Subcommittee. He noted with regret that although the exchange of views on substantive issues had been characterized by a constructive and positive atmosphere, there was still a wide gulf between the positions of Member States on the issue.

12. The Legal Subcommittee had achieved substantive progress in its discussions on the question of the benefits deriving from the exploration and utilization of outer space. The Working Group on that item had conducted in-depth discussions based on a working paper submitted by a number of countries of the Group of 77.

13. All delegations had agreed that spin-offs from space technology were continuing to yield substantial practical benefits in a wide variety of fields and scientific disciplines. The most promising of them were industrial measurement and control, image and data processing, medicine, computer systems, robotics, special materials, chemicals and water treatment and refrigeration. The Committee agreed that there was a strong need to examine ways to expand and strengthen international cooperation in the field of spin-off benefits of space technology in order to ensure that all countries, in particular the developing countries, had equal access to those technologies. In that connection, the Committee had expressed its satisfaction that the United Nations Programme on Space Applications was planning to hold, under the aegis of the United Nations and the United States of America, an international workshop on spin-off benefits of space technology.

14. Many countries welcomed the Committee's discussion of the question of enlarging its membership and the opportunity to take part in its constructive activities. The Committee had agreed with the proposal of its Chairman that its membership should be enlarged by not more than eight Member States, and that its enlargement should be regionally balanced and based on proposals of the various interested regional groups.

15. The current year marked the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies and, in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement, the question of its review had been included in the provisional agenda of the General Assembly. The Committee had come to the conclusion that because the Agreement had so far been ratified by only nine Member States and signed by five others, any possible revision of its provisions should be conducted with prudence and only on the basis of consultation with Member States. Accordingly, the Committee had recommended that the General Assembly should refrain from taking any decision on the question of the possibility of revising the Agreement at its forty-ninth session.

16. The Committee had agreed to continue constructively to discuss the question of the convening of a third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE). The Secretary-General had called upon the United Nations and the specialized agencies to develop new policies and programmes for the use of space technologies in the post-cold-war era. It was essential to use the possibility of convening a third UNISPACE conference in order jointly to formulate new policies and programmes and to ensure that the benefits deriving from the development of space technology could be shared by all countries, including the developing countries. Space technology could be the key to solving such major contemporary problems as environmental degradation and the need for sustainable development.

17. Mr. AHAMED (India) said that India had taken part in the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space from the very early stages of the development of space technology, with the goal of using achievements in that sphere to guarantee faster social and economic development. During the previous year India had passed several major milestones. On 4 May 1994 India had launched an

ASLV-D4 launch vehicle, which had successfully placed into a low-earth inclined orbit a 130-kilogram SROSS-C2 scientific satellite designed to carry out astronomical observations and to investigate the Earth's atmosphere. The second major milestone had been the successful launch, on 15 October 1994, of the PSLV-D2 rocket, which had placed into orbit an 804-kilogram Indian remote-sensing satellite. The satellite had already been tested in orbit, and its research equipment was functioning normally. Indian remote-sensing satellites were used for major national economic applications, including that of ensuring rational management of natural resources. The data received from those satellites were used in particular for agriculture, fisheries, soil and water resources management, forestry and nature conservation. Other major spheres of application for space technology in India included telecommunications, television, meteorology, disaster warning and search and rescue operations. Those applications were supported by the INSAT series of satellites, which operated in geostationary orbits. The launch of the next satellite in that series, INSAT-2C, was scheduled during the coming year. Data received from the Indian remote-sensing satellites was made available to users in many countries.

18. The Indian space programme promoted the development of international cooperation in the field of the peaceful uses of outer space through the pursuit of bilateral cooperation with several other space agencies and through active participation in relevant international forums. Recently, India had actively participated in the Ministerial Conference on Space Technology Applications for Development in Asia and the Pacific, held in Beijing. The 19th Asian Conference on Remote Sensing was scheduled to be held in Bangalore, India, in November 1994.

19. His delegation was pleased to note that the Committee agreed that it was necessary to convene a third UNISPACE conference and that prior to recommending a date for such a conference, there should be a consensus recommendation on its agenda, venue and funding. He reiterated India's proposal to host the conference.

20. His delegation was pleased to note the progress achieved in the consideration of another important subject, namely the question of space debris, which had recently been added to the agenda of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. Speedy progress on that subject would make it possible to minimize the risk of collision between space objects and debris. It was essential to give priority attention to the Committee's various recommendations on the subject. In the Legal Subcommittee some progress had been made on all agenda items; he expressed the hope that in the future speedier progress would be possible in that Subcommittee.

21. Ms. VARGAS (Nicaragua), noting the changes that had recently occurred in the world, said that it must now be acknowledged that progress in the scientific, technical, social and economic fields could no longer be achieved at the expense of the poorest sectors of the world's population. Technology must not be the exclusive prerogative of the developed countries: it must be accessible to all, including the developing countries. The application of scientific and technical achievements to the establishment of a new climate of

international cooperation, which would ensure the broadest possible use of outer space for peaceful purposes, was possible only on the basis of concerted international efforts. Space technology must be developed and applied not only in the context of scientific and technical research, but also with a view to meeting the many requirements of the developing countries in areas such as training of specialists, remote sensing, environmental protection and telecommunications.

22. Her delegation had studied with interest the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its thirty-seventh session (A/49/20). In its resolution 48/39 of 10 December 1993 the General Assembly had requested the Committee to continue to consider, as a matter of priority, ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes. Her delegation noted with satisfaction that during the debate on that question the Committee had acknowledged the need to give special consideration to international cooperation on the utilization of space technology for information on disasters and provision of relief. Nicaragua considered the Committee's decision to take account of the conclusions of the First and Second Space Conferences of the Americas, held in Costa Rica in 1990 and in Chile in 1993, to be extremely important. The declarations of those conferences stressed the importance of cooperation agreements as a means of solving the problems encountered by the countries of Latin America, particularly problems of environmental degradation.

23. At its session, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had considered the study prepared by the Secretariat on space applications for forest resource management, and it was to be hoped that the recommendations contained therein would be taken into account by the Subcommittee during implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82).

24. In view of the importance to the developing countries of the possibility of utilizing remote-sensing systems to monitor the environment, the Committee's appeal to Member States and international agencies to continue the practice of free distribution of meteorological information should be supported. The need for assistance to the developing countries in that area had also been recognized in the analytical report prepared by the Secretariat on the role that the Committee could play in view of the decisions and recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

25. It should be recalled that at the time of the Committee's establishment, 35 years previously, emphasis had been placed on the special role it had to play in the field of science and technology. Currently, there were increasingly frequent calls for an intensification of that work, but at the same time, having regard to the need to establish a new system of international security, it was necessary to adopt a more pragmatic and patient approach, so as to enable the Committee to make use of the results of the work of the Conference on Disarmament and of the First Committee of the General Assembly in areas such as use of nuclear power sources in outer space and the programme to avert an arms race in outer space.

26. At present the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, the Legal Subcommittee, and also the Committee itself were showing ever greater solidarity with the developing countries on matters relating to remote sensing of the Earth by satellites, life sciences and the environment. Nicaragua considered that one of the most important ways of regulating joint work in those directions would be the elaboration of legal principles ensuring that developed and developing countries alike had access to space activities and the benefits associated therewith. Her delegation noted with satisfaction the contribution made by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to the work of the Committee on widely different aspects of the peaceful uses of outer space. Practical expressions of that contribution were the convening in Peru of the United Nations Regional Workshop on Remote Sensing Applications of Radar Technology to Environmental and Natural Resources Sciences, the readiness of the Government of Ecuador to contribute to regional cooperation in connection with the operation of the satellite ground receiving station at Cotopaxi and the management and financing of the station, and also the effective work of the Government of Chile as pro tempore secretariat in following up the recommendations of the Second Space Conference of the Americas. Furthermore, Nicaragua awaited with great interest the establishment in the Latin American region of the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education and noted with satisfaction that Brazil and Mexico had concluded negotiations on that question. She also wished to thank the Secretariat for its recommendation concerning the holding of a United Nations Regional Conference on Space Technology for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

27. Outer space was the property of all humankind, and participation in the Committee's work by all countries, both developed and developing, was thus of crucial importance. In that context she commended the decision of the Committee to enlarge its membership from 1995, and said that Nicaragua, whose candidature had been supported by the Latin American regional group, hoped to be elected a member of the Committee in the course of the current session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.